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SOME ACCOUNT OF THE LATE MISSIONARIES TO THE WEST INDIES;

IN

TWO LETTERS

FROM THE

Rev. Dr. COKE, to the Rev. J. WESLEY.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

SOME

ACCOUNT, &c.

LETTER I.

Barbadoes, Dec. 9, 1788.

Hon. and moſt dear Sir,

I Have the pleaſure of informing you of our ſafe arrival in this Iſland, after a voyage of five weeks and four days.

Our voyage, all things conſidered, was perhaps as pleaſant a one as ever was ſailed. In the turbulent Bay of Biſcay, my Brethren were very ſick. From Cape Finiſterre to this Iſland, the wind was favourable all the way.

And here I muſt not omit to bear the moſt unfeigned teſtimony of gratitude in behalf of the Captain of our ſhip. Our accommodations in every reſpect were very excellent: and he left nothing unprovided, which he thought might be neceſſary, or in any wiſe commodious

for us; and his whole treatment of us from the beginning to the end was affectionate and generous to the laſt degree.

Captain *Sundius* being a man who ſincerely fears God, we had full liberty to ſing and pray as often as we pleaſed, and he never neglected to join us. In all my voyages till this, I do not recollect that we were ſerviceable to any ſailor except one: but the firſt time I preached in the Hankey, (on thoſe words of our Lord, *Verily, verily, I ſay unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot ſee the kingdom of God*;) the whole crew ſeemed deeply affected, and the labours of my Brethren and our public prayers, deepened the impreſſions they had received. They were eager to receive any books we offered to give them. Inſtead of the looſe ſongs they ſung among themſelves at the beginning of the voyage, they delighted in meeting together to read our books. When we parted, the tears trickled down many of their cheeks: they ſhewed the greateſt earneſtneſs to ſqueeze us by the hand: and when our boat dropped aſtern, they gave us three as hearty cheers (which is one of their ways of expreſſing affection) as, I believe, ever were given by a company of ſailors.

On Thurſday the 4th of December we landed at Bridge-Town, in Barbadoes. As we knew no one, and the expences in this country at the inns are enormous, I embraced the opportunity of ſending Meſſrs. *Lumb* and *Gamble* to our friends on the Iſland of St. Vincent, by a merchant-ſhip which ſailed that very evening. As Mr. *Pearce* (who remained with me) informed me that a company of ſoldiers, who reſided ſometime ago at Kinſale, in Ireland, and

and among whom there were ſeveral pious perſons, were now, he believed, in Barbadoes, I deſired him to go in ſearch of them. In two hours he brought back with him one of the ſoldiers; and ſoon afterwards we were joined by a ſerjeant, who on ſeeing Mr. *Pearce*, and recollecting him, ſeized him in his arms, in the moſt kind and affectionate manner.

Our friends the ſoldiers ſoon informed us, that the love of Chriſt had conſtrained them to bear a public teſtimony for God; and that a Mr. *Button*, a merchant of the town had provided for them a large room which he formerly uſed as a warehouſe, in which they exhorted. We immediately determined to make a viſit to this kind merchant the next morning: but he prevented us by an invitation to breakfaſt with him, being previouſly informed by the ſoldiers of our arrival.

To my great ſurprize I found that Mr. *Button* knew me well; and though I had no perſonal acquaintance with him, he had frequently heard me preach at Baltimore, in Maryland, where he ſometime ago reſided. Four of his black ſervants had been baptized by me at that time, and one of them (a woman) is truly alive to God. His Lady is a native of this Iſland. His houſe, his heart, his *all* ſeemed to be at our ſervice. We diſcharged our bill at the inn, and found an aſylum indeed with this our benevolent friend. After breakfaſt Mr. *Pearce* and I paid our reſpects to the Governor of the Iſland, who received us with great politeneſs. In the evening I preached in Mr. *Button*'s houſe to about three hundred perſons, about twice as many being obliged to go away for want of room. The next evening I had as large a congregation as on the former. Many

heard with deep attention, whilſt I endeavoured to ſhew them how the Comforter convinces of ſin, righteouſneſs and judgment. That morning I rode into the country to viſit a Gentleman, (*Henry Trotman*, Eſq;) for whom my kind friend Mr. *Dornford* of London, had procured for me a letter of recommendation, in order to open a way for Mr. *Pearce* into the country: but very providentially there were two Gentlemen of the ſame chriſtian and ſirname in the Iſland, and I was led to the houſe of the Gentleman of that name, for whom my letter was not intended. He received me with the utmoſt politeneſs, and after I had breakfaſted and dined with him, and laid before him our plan of Operations, he informed me that his houſe ſhould be always open to my friend Mr. *Pearce*, and his ſlaves at his command at all proper hours. He has about two hundred.

On Sunday morning, after Mr. *Pearce* had preached at ſeven o'clock, we breakfaſted according to invitation with the Curate of the pariſh, who received us with great civility. After dinner I received a letter from the Maſter of a Free-School offering me his great ſchool-room for my evening's duty; where I had a very large and attentive congregation, many of the principal gentry of the town attending. In the evening Mr. *Errington*, one of the Magiſtrates and Poſt-Maſter-General of the Iſland, made us a viſit and ſupped with us. Between thirty and forty years ago he had frequently heard you and your brother preach in our Chapel in Newcaſtle-upon-Tyne. He expreſſed the greateſt ſatisfaction and approbation of our deſigns, warmly invited Mr. *Pearce* to viſit him frequently, and told us he ſhould be

be happy on all occaſions to yield us any ſervice in his power.

On Monday morning I viſited the Mr. *Trotman* whom I had in vain ſought for on Saturday. He is a plain country Gentleman, has about two hundred and fifty Negroes on his plantations, and after dinner informed me that he would himſelf take the firſt opportunity of waiting on Mr. *Pearce*, and ſhould be happy in having any of his Slaves inſtructed by him.

Having thus finiſhed the buſineſs which lay before me in this Iſland, I took a place in a veſſel bound for St. Vincent's, and expecting to ſail in the evening, deſired Mr. *Pearce* to preach: as the violent heat to which preaching throws us in this climate, would have rendered it very hazardous to have gone on the water: and I had the pleaſure to find that he gave univerſal ſatisfaction to a large congregation.

At Mr. *Button's* there were three Ladies on a viſit who have a plantation and many Negroes, who have, I truſt, in ſome degree received Divine impreſſions by our means. Their houſe will be opened to Mr. *Pearce* whenever he pleaſes: and our ſoldiers have engaged to hold prayer-meetings in different parts of the town three or four times a week.

Thus by a ſeries of remarkable providences a wide door ſeems to be opened for us in Barbadoes. This Iſland is moſt favourably circumſtanced for the increaſe of the work of God. It is twenty-two miles long, and fifteen broad. It is ſaid to contain about 70,000 Blacks, and from 25 to 30,000 Whites. The Iſland is alſo in general divided into very ſmall farms or plantations, ſo that even among the Whites, there

there are thouſands whoſe incomes are very ſmall, and many who are very poor, and who cannot therefore indulge themſelves with all the extremes of ſenſuality, in the manner too many do in this luxuriant country.

I am, dear Sir,

Your moſt obedient, and

Affectionate Son,

THOMAS COKE.

LETTER II.

Dominica, Dec. 19, 1788.

Hon. and dear Sir,

ON the 11th inſt. I landed at St. Vincent's, and in a few hours after ſet off with Mr. *Baxter* for the Caribb country, preaching in the evening to a lovely company of Negroes in a little town called Caliaqua. The next day we were joined by Meſſrs. *Gamble* and *Clark*, and reached the houſe of our hoſpitable friend, Dr. *Davidſon*: who ſet off with us in the morning to viſit the Caribbs. The roads, or rather narrow paths over the mountains which form the boundaries between the Engliſh and them, are the worſt and the moſt tremendous I ever rode. Sometime ſince, Mr. *Baxter* had near loſt his life in croſſing them. His horſe fell down a precipice of thirty feet perpendicular, and the hind legs of the horſe were over the precipice

precipice before he was alarmed, when he immediately threw himſelf off. In one place we could not even lead our horſes, till a company of Caribbs who were paſſing by, lent us their cutlaſſes, with which we at laſt cut open a way. When we had deſcended the great mountain, we came into one of the moſt beautiful plains I ever ſaw in my life. It is but ſeven miles long, and three broad, but I think it is as beautiful as uncultivated Nature can make it. It forms a bow, the ſtring of which is waſhed by the Atlantic ocean, and the bow itſelf ſurrounded by lofty mountains. Here the Caribbs chiefly dwell. As we paſſed by their villages, they ſtood at their doors in ranks, crying out, "*Bou jou, Bou jou*:" (a corruption of *Bon Jour*, a good day;) others cried out, "*How dee, How dee*:" and on many of them being aſked, they delivered their cutlaſſes into our hands, which is the higheſt proof of confidence they can give. We had with us at this time one of the ſons of the grand Chief of the Caribbs (*Chateaway*) He has been under the tuition of Mr. and Mrs. *Baxter* for ſome time, and ſpeaks a good deal of Engliſh. His name is *John Dimmey*, a fine young man, and of a princely carriage. His father the grand Chief was gone from home; if I could have ſeen the father I believe I ſhould have obtained his conſent to take his ſon with me to England. His ſentiments are highly refined for a ſavage. "Teach me your language, *Dimmey*," ſaid Mr. *Baxter* to him one day "and I will give you my watch." "I will teach you my language," replied the young Chief, "but I will not have your watch."

When

When we entered into the houſe of one of the Chiefs whoſe name is *De Valley*, Mr. *Dimmey* whiſpered to Mr. *Baxter* that the family would not be ſatisfied, if we did not take ſome refreſhment, to which we conſented: and they ſoon brought a large diſhful of eggs, and a bowl of punch. Mr. *Dimmey* alone could be with difficulty perſuaded to ſit down with us at table, the reſt would ſerve. A little ſon of the Chief alſo, (a very beautiful boy for his colour, who had been under the inſtruction of Mr. *Baxter*, and had been already taught to ſpell) gave us high entertainment by the convincing proof he gave us of an infant genius.

But in the midſt of all this kindneſs there was ſome degree of jealouſy: for I perceived that Mr. *Baxter* ſeveral times informed them that I received no pay from the King. Mr. *Baxter* ſeemed to live in their affections; and as he has already made a conſiderable progreſs in their language, I could not help intreating him to ſpend two years among them, and give them a full trial. Great as the croſs was to that good man who expected to return to his beloved Antigua, he immediately conſented. On our return from the Caribb country, I viſited our new School-Houſe, and found it much larger than I expected, and far too large for one family. I therefore ordered the workmen to divide it: one half of which I appropriated to the uſe of Mr. and Mrs. *Baxter*, and the other half to that of Mr. and Mrs. *Joyce*. As Mrs. *Baxter* intends to educate ſome of the Caribb girls, we ſhall now have three teachers among them. The conduct of Mrs. *Baxter* in this inſtance is not to be overlooked. Though born of a conſiderable family in Antigua, and brought

brought up in all the ſoftneſs and luxury of the country, ſhe readily conſented ſome years ago, that her huſband ſhould ſacrifice a place of four hundred a year currency which he held under Government, that he might devote his whole time and ſtrength to the work of God: and now was perfectly willing to go with her huſband among ſavages, and ſpend her time in forming their totally uncultivated minds.

I was very uneaſy when I found that little had yet been done by Mr. *Joyce* in the education of the Children: but when all the difficulties were laid open, in the proper ſettlement of the land on which the houſe was built, in bringing the materials for building to the proper ſpot, the illneſs of Mrs. *Joyce*, and ſome other particulars, my mind was appeaſed, and I truſt every thing will ſoon have the moſt favourable appearance through the bleſſing of God.

I feel myſelf much attached to theſe poor ſavages. The ſweet ſimplicity and cheerfulneſs they manifeſted on every ſide, ſoon wore off every unfavourable impreſſion my mind had imbibed from the accounts I had received of their cruelties. Cruelties originating probably with ourſelves rather than with them. They are a handſomer people than the Negroes, but have undoubtedly a warlike appearance, as their very women frequently carry cutlaſſes in their hands, and always knives by their naked ſides.

We now returned to Kingſton, preaching by the way, and being received by the planters with every mark of kindneſs and reſpect. Indeed the whole body of the people ſeems to wiſh us ſucceſs. Many were the proofs of affection ſhewn us at our departure, eſpecially by

by one whose delicacy will not admit of my mentioning his name.

Having appointed Meſſrs. *Gamble* and *Clark* to labour in the Engliſh diviſion of the Iſland (Mr. *Baxter* now and then making them a viſit) I hired a veſſel for Dominica; and with Mr. and Mrs. *Baxter* (who were deſirous of making one viſit to their old friends in Antigua before they ſettled among the Caribbs) and Mr. *Lumb*, ſet ſail on Tueſday the 16th for Dominica.

I am, dear Sir,

Your moſt dutiful,

Moſt affectionate, and

Moſt obliged Son,

THOMAS COKE.

BRITISH MUSEUM